

Riding High in the Low Countries

Experience Holland & Belgium

It's little wonder the Dutch masters were so inspired to paint Holland's rich landscape; for a nation in which many live below sea level, the high points are everywhere apparent. Here in the legendary land of tulips and windmills, we navigate our way by pedalling the endless towpaths, bike paths, polders and dykes that dot the land. After a visit to UNESCO Kinderdijk, we venture south into Flanders in Belgium, whose cultural heart, Bruges, is a work of art unto itself. Stately Flemish architecture soars over tranquil canals and bustling squares, testament to the creative might of its spinners, tapestry-makers, and artists centuries ago. Kids can channel the creativity too: sand-castle building, painting, artisanal chocolate lessons. The journey is quite simply a masterpiece for all ages.

THE B&R DIFFERENCE

"The trip was fabulous... Holland is so much more than tulip fields in bloom—cosmopolitan cities, beautiful landscapes, coastal forests, seaside towns, marshes, birds and historical sites. Most of all, it was the amazing B&R guides and the hospitality and generosity of the Dutch people that really made the trip so special."

*Diana Beattie,
Holland Biking*

WHY TRAVEL WITH B&R?

Here's our idea of quality family time. After the kids finish a fun treasure hunt through town, enjoy a freshly baked *stroopwafel* together in the historical centre of Gouda before biking one of the most scenic bike paths of South Holland. A whirlpool or sauna for parents and a soccer game on the wide lawn for the kids, a classic Dutch dinner and then the next morning we set off direct on our bikes for a ride to UNESCO Kinderdijk and its splendid windmill complex.

Other questions?
Call us at 800 678 1147

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the journey

Days 1 & 2

The Hague & Medieval Leiden

WE RENDEZVOUS IN AMSTERDAM AND DRIVE OUT TO KATWIJK aan Zee, a delightful seaside resort not far from the mouth of the Old Rhine. We'll meet up with our bikes and pedal out along the beach and into the rugged dunes, all the while enjoying our first experience (of many) on Holland's first-rate bike paths. With a few kilometres logged, we pause for lunch at Pannenkoekenhuis, whose name is as much a mouthful as the scrumptious pancakes (think crepes) that are served there. After lunch, kids ride on to nearby Scheveningen for a lesson in sandcastle construction from a professional sandcastle builder – yes, such a thing exists! Meantime, adults ride through to The Hague to check in and then pay a visit to another sand-themed attraction: the spectacular Panorama Mesdag. Located right beside our hotel in its original location, the panorama is a striking 360-degree painting of the Dutch coastline in the 19thC. Families reunite for a little exploration time before we sit down altogether for dinner on the hotel's terrace – perched, most appropriately, above a canal.



The next morning's destination is Leiden, the quintessential Dutch city of tree-lined canals, outdoor cafes, and deep artistic heritage. Kids, in fact, will hop off their bikes earlier in Wassenaar, then drive to Leiden for a special Rembrandt tour and drawing lesson led by our friend Willem, an art teacher and historian. Separately, adults will walk the town in the expert company of our guide Marike, who will enlighten us with her animated narration of Leiden's lively past. After a light lunch, adults remount to bike back to The Hague, while the junior set drives over to Madurodam, a very cool representation of Holland's greatest hits in miniature. Back at the hotel in the evening, the generations split up again: grown-ups enjoy a tasting of the Dutch gin known as *jenever* ahead of a savoury Indonesian dinner; the young ones instead have a casual burger.

HOTEL

Hilton The Hague, The Hague

The erstwhile central post office of the city has been expertly renovated and repurposed to this fine hotel. And 'central' is the operative word, as it sits just steps from the city's best restaurants, shopping and the Royal Castle. B&R has secured Executive rooms that include access to the private lounge on the top floor, with views across the city's skyline.

THE BIKING

Day 1: A 29 km (18 mi.) flat ride on bike paths through sand dunes and seaside villages.

Day 2: Adults ride 32 km (20 mi.) in and out of towns on flat bike paths; kids ride only the first 10 km (6 mi.) in the morning before being whisked off for activities.

Other questions?

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info@butterfield.com

Day 3 Rural Holland and Gouda Cheese

After breakfast and a farewell to The Hague, adults will pedal eastward out into the rich fields and pastures of the Dutch countryside. Cows abound, so it's no great surprise to happen upon the town of Gouda, home of the eponymous (and delicious) mild cheese. We'll taste the round, gold-skinned local product, but also avail ourselves of the good shopping, including perhaps the country's best *stroopwafels*, the honey-drenched thin waffle that has powered many a B&R biker down the years. The kids will arrive in Gouda by van to partake in a treasure hunt that includes the city landmark Sint Jans Kerk church. Families meet up for a lunch on your own on the sprawling main square and then ride together the remaining distance to our next hotel. Dinner tonight is in its stylish dining room.



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HOTEL

De Arendshoeve, Bergambacht

This newly remodeled hotel reopened its doors in February of 2012. Situated in the heart of the polders, with a spa and indoor pool, it is an excellent place to relax after a long day of riding. The rooms are spacious with all the comforts you need.

THE BIKING

Day 3: For adults, a 40 km (25 mi.) flat ride on bike paths through the polders (low-lying farmland) via Gouda. Kids ride the last 17 km (11 mi.) in the afternoon only.

Days 4 & 5 Kinderdijk to Bruges

Today is a highlight! We begin with a leisurely departure from the hotel – perhaps preceded by a morning soccer game for the kids on the wide lawn – for the quiet ride across and then along the River Lek to Kinderdijk. A UNESCO World Heritage site, Kinderdijk is the largest surviving agglomeration of traditional windmills in Europe. Once there, we'll walk the towpaths among the mills, learning about their function (they didn't actually mill anything!) and role as not just machines but also family homes. Photo ops abound. Time permitting, we'll



HOTEL

The Dukes' Palace, Bruges

Our final hotel is a former aristocratic residence right in the heart of the UNESCO World Heritage city of Bruges. If the myriad allures of the city can be resisted, the Dukes' Palace offers sauna, hammam and fitness centre amenities, as well as a private garden where kids can make themselves at home.

THE BIKING

Day 4: A 16 km (10 mi.) flat ride on bike paths and quiet roads to Kinderdijk; longer option available.

Day 5: Adults ride 40 km (20 mi.) in and out of Bruges on flat bike paths and quiet roads; kids ride only the first 18 km (11 mi.) in the morning before being whisked off for a picnic and activities.

even take in the short historical film documentary about the site's history, before adjourning by bike to a nearby restaurant for a light lunch, where our day's riding ends. We'll spend much of the afternoon driving across the south of Holland into Belgium, arriving in Bruges in the late afternoon. After settling into our digs, we set out together for a private sunset boat cruise through the city's picturesque canals; again, have cameras at the ready as a

local expert narrates our voyage. We'll disembark in the heart of Bruges' lively restaurant scene, from which each family is free to choose a venue for an on-your-own dinner.

With Flemish textiles and trade in the ascendant, 800 years ago Bruges was among the wealthiest cities in Europe, and the legacy of its status remains evident in its stately feel and marvelous architecture. We'll follow bike paths out of this compelling cityscape into the surrounding countryside, where steeples mark the approach to quaint villages, with the occasional windmill thrown in to commune with its Dutch neighbours. Adults can choose among the eateries in these towns for lunch, while the kids are shuttled back into Bruges for a picnic lunch and then a real treat, literally: a hands-on chocolate-making demonstration at a chocolate museum housed in a 15thC palace. Chocolate, along with waffles, is a world-renowned Belgian specialty, and the kids will get full immersion into its history – and taste! Time is left for them, reunited with parents, to work up their appetites anew with some unstructured exploration of Bruges, before we cap our week together with dinner in a brasserie serving fine regional fare.

Day 6

Homeward Bound

We'll say our goodbyes over breakfast this morning at The Dukes' Palace before departures to the airport and onwards. Your guides will be happy to assist you with your travel plans.

Other questions?

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A Country in Bloom

By Alice Van der Voort

Growing up in Holland, one of my favourite times of year was late-winter, when the ice begins to melt. Every morning I would look through the kitchen window to see if the first *krokusje* (crocus) had poked through the soil in our little front yard. Its arrival meant spring was on its way and Holland would soon be covered in crocuses, hyacinths and tulips. It was always a surprise to see what colour the flowers would be each year.

The Dutch have their own creative ways of celebrating the rest of the year: we bring in the New Year with the *Nieuwjaarsduik*, a plunge into the freezing waters off the coast of the Hague's Scheveningen Beach. As the temperatures turn even colder, we wait for the canals to freeze over so we can go ice skating, with lots of breaks at the little snack bars lined up on the shore selling *koek* and *zopie* (cookies and drinks), split-pea soup and hot chocolate.

But it's not until spring that we finally get to enjoy two of Holland's greatest gifts in tandem: biking and flowers. Whether it is spring or summer, the bike paths are lined with camellias, *viooltjes*, tulips and impatiens. In town, flowerbeds run along the lanes, and as you cycle past homes you can peek through the windows and see bouquets on almost every table.



Holland is all about flowers. It is a custom to offer flowers when you visit a Dutch home for any occasion: birthday, wedding or just to say thanks. And even on the dreariest winter day, we believe a simple bouquet brings out the sun and reminds us that the first crocus is already waiting to appear.

B&R REGIONAL EXPERT

Alice Van der Voort

Alice was born in the royal town of The Hague. Growing up in Holland meant learning to ride a bike and to skate right after learning to walk. Being a real Flying Dutch(wo)man, she has lived in many parts of the world and now has her principle residence in Italy. Her penchant for dancing on tables is legendary.



2015 Price:

From \$4,995*

*Please call for kids' pricing

Duration

6 Days / 5 Nights

Please see our website for list of departures.

Start

Amsterdam

Hotel Pulitzer

9:00am

Finish

Bruges

Dukes' Palace Hotel

After breakfast

the details

HOTEL TYPE

Bistro Hotels

Hotels on our Bistro trips are stylish 4-star properties that offer a casual and comfortable place to relax and reflect on the day. Often without a 24-hour concierge or room service, these properties tend to be smaller family-run hotels that work perfectly for experiencing the region.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- All hotel accommodation
- All breakfasts, three lunches (four for kids), and four dinners, including wine
- Services of B&R guide(s) and support van(s)
- All special events, private tours, guest experts and entrance fees
- Use of a customized hybrid or a racing bike with drop bars, equipped with handlebar bag and helmet, and kids' equipment where needed
- Detailed maps, route suggestions and water bottle
- All transportation from rendezvous to drop-off
- All gratuities for baggage, porters and hotel service

LEVEL OF ACTIVITY

Occasional

The riding throughout the trip is very flat and mostly on dedicated bike paths, which are beautifully constructed and marked in the region – and often have their own traffic signals! We ride into and out of two fairly large cities, The Hague and Bruges, yet rarely have to contend with what would be typically called 'city traffic,' due to the bike paths. Bikers will feel safe at all times.

MORE INFO

How do I get to Amsterdam?

Most transatlantic flights to Holland arrive in Amsterdam to Schiphol Airport, just 15 km outside of Amsterdam; many European and domestic flights also land here. There are numerous ways of getting into Amsterdam from the airport, but the most trouble-free method is by train. The trains are swift and extremely punctual. The fare to downtown is €6.60 for first class. The train station lies under the airport, and trains run approximately every 10 minutes; it's a 20-minute trip directly to Central Station, in downtown Amsterdam. Another easy alternative to the city from Schiphol is by taxi. The fare downtown is approximately €45, and the ride should take about 20-30 minutes.

HOTEL PULITZER, AMSTERDAM

www.hotelpulitzeramsterdam.nl

This unique 5-star luxury hotel is located in 25 beautifully restored 17th and 18thC canal houses on the Prinsengracht in the old city centre. It is a member of Starwood's Luxury Collection, and is ideally located close to museums and major attractions such as Anne Frank's house, the Flowermarket and the Dam.

Other questions?
Contact us 800 678 1147
info@butterfield.com

The itinerary information may vary slightly for your specific departure as we continuously research and develop each trip. Inclement weather may also necessitate minor alterations. Prices are per person and in USD. © 2014 Butterfield & Robison Inc. Revised October 2014.



your next steps

At Butterfield & Robinson, the guiding starts while you're still at home. We make sure you know everything you need to know before you've even left your living room.

READY TO BOOK?

- Call or email a Travel Advisor (or your travel agent) with any remaining questions, and to reserve your space.
1-800-678-1147 / info@butterfield.com
- Reserve your flights to and from the region.
- Book your hotel accommodation for the night before your B&R trip.
- Make sure your passport is up to date.
- Enquire after travel insurance.

Once you are confirmed on a B&R trip, you will receive a Confirmation Email that links to tons of information to help you prepare for your trip. Then, about a month before you leave, we will send you a list of your fellow travellers, final rendezvous instructions and your hotel contact numbers.

Weather: Amsterdam

month	high	low
Jan/Feb	41	34
Mar/Apr	52	39
May/Jun	66	51
Jul/Aug	69	55
Sep/Oct	61	51
Nov/Dec	46	37

Other questions?
Contact us 800 678 1147
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Like B&R on Facebook and get the latest news and photos from the road, updates from guides and more.

YOUR BIKE

We pride ourselves on having the very best equipment for each activity and locale, maintained by expert staff and custom tweaked just for you. To learn about our biking equipment and see pictures of what you'll be riding, visit us at butterfield.com/about/equipment/bikes. And don't forget that we will modify your bike to accommodate most special gear requests. Just ask.

EXTENDING YOUR TRIP

At the front end of the trip, Amsterdam is one of Europe's great cities, with plenty to offer for families, from canal tours to the newly renovated and reopened Rijksmuseum. At the end, strongly consider an extra night in Bruges, or one of its Flemish sister cities, Ghent or Brussels – all are worthy of the time spent.

STAY IN TOUCH!

Sign up to receive *The Slow Road* our e-newsletter that is full of travel news, unique offers and B&R insider info.

PHOTO CONTEST

While on your trip, keep in mind you can win some great prizes with the B&R Photo Contest. We've created three categories that capture the true spirit of B&R adventure: Faces, Places and Moments. Submit your top shots and show us how you see the world with B&R. Full details are at www.butterfield.com/photocontest.

In the meantime, if you have any questions about your B&R experience—big, small or downright quirky—please call a Travel Advisor, or contact your travel professional. We are always happy to help.